

## Right As Rain by VerityR

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**Summary:**

Home for the holidays, Nancy gets caught in the rain with a not-quite friend. They get out of the rain together.

## 1. If You Like Piña Coladas

It wasn't that Nancy put much stock in any particular higher power, but it was hard to see how this sudden torrential downpour could be anything but a personal attack. As soon as she'd decided to escape her house and walk into town, the sky darkened, thunder cracked. Like a bad joke: *how could this day possibly get any worse!* Cue the lightning.

Snow might have at least been scenic; rain in January seemed an excessive cruelty. Someone out there had to have sensed how deeply Nancy resented being back with her perfectly nice parents in their perfectly nice house. And they were punishing her for it with a miserable walk into Hawkin's already miserable Main Street.

Despite the mind-numbing familiarity of the town, Nancy surprised herself by almost walking past the gas station entirely. Her mother's warnings about the unsavory types that loitered there had rendered the place, in her mental geography, a nonentity. And it might have stayed that way, if not for the flicker of a dim, orange light. Unmistakable, even from a distance. And where there was a smoker, Nancy reasoned, there was bound to be a slightly dry place to stand. She made a beeline, her Keds now soaked through completely, socks squishing with every step. Which, Nancy decided bitterly, was probably karmic retribution for managing to make the weather about herself.

In a moment, she'd wish she hadn't run. Squishing socks and all. Because of course it would have to be Jonathan standing there, cheeks hollowing as he inhaled. For a split second, he doesn't notice her, and Nancy almost turned right back around. They don't have to do this. But she did it, nonetheless.

"Oh," was all Nancy said. Not least because she was out of breath. "Hey!"

Jonathan blinked several times, like she was some sort of hallucination. Hopefully not because of how ghoulish she looked.

"Nancy," he said, tepidly, by way of greeting.

“Bum a smoke?” She was joking. It was clear Jonathan didn't get it. They hadn't seen each other since graduation, she supposed. It was natural there'd be some strangeness.

“Uh, sure,” Jonathan muttered. He began rifling through his coat pockets, pointedly avoiding eye contact.

Nancy was too embarrassed to correct him. “How's your holiday been?”

“Um, good? I guess.”

Jonathan pulled out a cigarette.

“And your mom? Will?”

“Yeah, they're... good.”

Their fingers brushed as he handed it over.

“And, let me guess, you are... ”

Jonathan finally met her gaze. He grinned sheepishly.

“Good. Yeah.”

Nancy smiled back. “That's good.”

Absently, she ran a finger along the raised scar across her palm, shuddering. Thinking back to kitchen knives, monsters, her hands on his. She couldn't seem to remember if they'd touched since then.

“You want a light?” Jonathan asked, cautiously.

“Oh.” Of course. She had sort of forgot she'd be expected to *smoke* the thing. “Yeah. Please.”

Fishing through pockets again, Jonathan produced a silver Zippo lighter.

With toss of her head, Nancy took it, pretending she couldn't feel Jonathan's eyes on her. *Play it cool, Wheeler*, she demanded of herself. She brought the cigarette to her lips.

“This *fucking*— ”

Of course, Nancy *would* instantly tarnish her burgeoning cool by proving herself completely incompetent with a lighter, only managing to produce meager sparks that burned her thumb.

“Here,” came Jonathan’s quiet voice, “let me.”

He lit the cigarette with a practiced flick and like this, Jonathan was undeniably striking. His steady hands. The elegant angles of his face in the pale, yellow light.

Nancy leaned in, trying not to wonder if their faces had ever been so close before. Not that this counted. This was nothing. Clinical, even. It’d be over in a second, as soon as—

The light extinguished in the wind.

“Sorry,” Jonathan said, as if such a thing could possibly be his fault. “I’ll just—”

He lit it again, this time cupping his hand around the flame, leaning in closer. To anyone rubbernecking through the haze of rain, it’d look like they were kissing.

At the very idea, Nancy inhaled sharply, forgetting the newly lit cigarette between her lips. Never before had the phrase “coughing up a lung” made so much sense.

Jonathan made a fairly noble attempt at stifling his laughter. “You okay?”

“That,” Nancy pronounced, between sputtering coughs, “was vile.”

Jonathan shrugged, still trying not to smile. “Bad habit anyway.”

“You want to get out of here?” Nancy asked. Not even sure where the thought had come from before it was out of her mouth.

But Jonathan nodded quickly. “Yes. I mean, yeah.”

It was hardly inevitable. Nancy could’ve turned back. She could’ve

paid attention to the weather report that morning or stuck around at home and watched Holly, like she'd been doing all break. She got into Jonathan Byers' car.

"How's Chicago?" Jonathan asked, eventually, fiddling with the radio.

"Oh, you know," Nancy said, looking out the window. "Windy."

Jonathan laughed and something in her fluttered and Nancy forgot, for a moment, how conversation worked.

"How's New York?"

"You know?" He grinned. "It never sleeps."

And then she was smiling too, despite herself.

"But really," Jonathan insisted. "Do you like it there?"

"I love it," Nancy admitted, almost guiltily. "It's here that's the problem."

Jonathan was quiet.

"But you get that, right?" *If anyone could get it, it would be you.*

But Jonathan just frowned. "You must miss some things, though. Harrington."

"Well, yeah," Nancy said at first, before his meaning sunk in, thinking of Mike. Holly, who was so big now. "I mean, no. Not like that." She shook her head.

"Steve and I broke up. Uh, right before Christmas."

Jonathan raised an eyebrow. "Harsh."

Nancy let it roll off her shoulders. "I guess. But it was a long time coming. With him at IU and... well. It just wasn't going to happen."

Jonathan just nodded. For a moment, the silence hung.

“Where are we even going?” Nancy asked, just to break the spell.

“Dunno. This was your idea,” Jonathan admitted, shrugging.

“I guess driving around Hawkins in the rain is marginally less depressing than walking around Hawkins in the rain.”

“So that’s what you were doing,” Jonathan said. “Not just— what was it you said? Bumming cigs?”

“Smokes,” Nancy corrected, smiling. “I was kidding.”

“Yeah, I worked that one out eventually.”

“You know I don’t smoke!” Nancy almost giggled, forgetting that she used to do that.

“Maybe you had taken it up!” Jonathan laughed. “I don’t know what you get up to on the mean streets of Chicago.”

“The mean— ” Nancy couldn’t even say it without starting to laugh. “You’re ridiculous. Or, I mean, you’re not but— you know, I missed you.”

Jonathan just looked at her for a long moment as the car glided to a stop.

“I missed you too.”

A car behind them honked.

Nancy cleared her throat. “So. Where are we off to?”

Jonathan chewed on his bottom lip for a second before answering with measured coolness. “My house?”

“Yeah,” Nancy answered, too quickly. “Okay.”

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

I don't know why I have such specific college headcanons for everyone buuuuuut I do. Jonathan POV up next! Let me know what you thought :)

(/edited for tense consistency, I have no idea what I was doing when I first published this, mea culpa.)

## 2. Hounds of Love Are Hunting

*This isn't happening.* That was what kept running through his head. As he tried to make small talk. As he drove around aimlessly. As he invited Nancy back to his house: *this isn't happening.*

Jesus. Jonathan wasn't entirely sure how he'd gotten the balls.

(That was a lie.)

*Steve and I broke up...*

And now Nancy was there, sitting at his kitchen table. Looking a little more than out of place, straight-backed and sipping at the coffee he'd made to be polite. She kept looking at him, searchingly. Maybe she still thought he had some grand master plan.

Or maybe she just didn't want to be there. After all, the last time she'd been in his house...

"Where's your brother?"

"Dunno." Jonathan hopped up on the counter. The house was sort of conspicuously empty. "With *your* brother, if I had to put money on it."

"Handy, that." Nancy was pulling her wet hair out of its ponytail, combing it through with her fingers. "Weird to think they're freshmen now."

"Will's almost as tall as me," Jonathan offered, pouring himself coffee. "It's disturbing."

"Mike's *already* taller than me." Nancy sighed, dramatically. "At least Holly still knows her place."

"Isn't she, like, four years old?"

"Five," Nancy corrected, with a wry grin. "And, yet, she still hasn't managed to save my parents marriage. Imagine that."



Jonathan choked on his coffee, very narrowly avoiding doing a spit take.

“Uh, what?”

Nancy rolled her eyes. “We have a *fourteen* year age difference. It's pretty clear why she came into existence. I mean, it's not like my mother doesn't own a diaphragm.” She looked ill for a moment. “Please don't make me elaborate on that point.”

Jonathan grimaced.

“We're in desperate need of a subject change,” Nancy proclaimed, crossing her legs. “Listen to any good music lately?”

Jonathan felt his shoulders slack. “Oh, yeah. It's a hell of a lot easier to get your hands on stuff in the city.”

Nancy grinned. “The *city*.”

“Still sort of weird to say that and not mean Indy,” he admitted, sheepishly.

“Chicago might not be as sexy as New York,” Nancy said, “But I get what you mean.”

“Chicago's plenty... ” —Jonathan realized belatedly that if he said the word ‘sexy’ it might sort of seem like he was flirting even though Nancy obviously wasn't and she'd said it so maybe it was fine but, fuck, he'd already taken too long of a pause— “...cool.”

Mercifully, Nancy laughed. “If you're in the market for a winning football team to be a fan of, sure.”

“Smoking, football. All part of the new Nancy Wheeler?”

She snorted. “More like, when you spend enough time in sports bars, you tend to appreciate when the team the drunks are rooting for win.”

Jonathan nodded knowingly, as if he'd ever been in a sports bar in his life. Not that it really seemed like Nancy's scene either. An image

of Nancy sipping primly from a foamy mug of beer, all buttoned up and proper among jersey-clad drunk guys popped into his head. Although he supposed it was a very *normal* thing to do. And maybe Nancy needed that. She deserved it, anyway.

“You still haven’t answered my question,” Nancy chimed.

Music. Right.

“Uh, there's The Cure’s new record. And, uh, Sonic Youth. Have you listened to any of them? Sort of weird, but uh... oh, and *Meat is Murder*. I’ve been listening to that nonstop for, like, a month.”

Nancy bit her lip like she was trying not to smile. “So, like, whiny British dudes, mainly.”

“Hey,” Jonathan protested, mock-offended. “Sonic Youth isn’t British.”

“I said mainly,” said Nancy, with a shrug. “That you like The Smiths says it all, honestly.”

“Who doesn’t like The Smiths?”

Nancy just looked at him skeptically.

“All right,” Jonathan sighed, exasperated. “What are you listening to that’s so great, then?”

“*Rock a Little*,” she answered, not skipping a beat. “And *Hounds of Love*.”

Jonathan nodded, deeming Stevie Nicks extremely acceptable, if not his cup of tea. Honestly, he was more surprised Nancy even knew who Kate Bush was.

And he must’ve looked it, because Nancy was crossing her arms, huffing, “What were you expecting? Madonna?”

“I was thinking more like... Phil Collins.”

Nancy shook her head, disgusted. “You think so little of me.”

“Well, ‘In The Air Tonight’ isn’t bad,” Jonathan allowed, trying to lighten the blow.

“I have a distinct recollection of you referring to Genesis as— and I quote—an ‘affront to good taste’.”

“You can hardly blame all of that on Phil Collins.” Jonathan shrugged, grinning. “And maybe I outgrew being a snob.”

Nancy raised an eyebrow. “Not that I’m such an expert, but I was fairly certain art school was supposed to have the opposite effect.”

Jonathan couldn’t help laughing. “You’re not wrong. About that, at least.”

“I’ve been wrong about something?” Nancy asked, eyes wide. “Doesn’t sound like me.”

“You’re wrong about The Smiths,” Jonathan declared. “Let me show you.”

With no elaboration, Jonathan led the way to his room, honestly sort of surprised when Nancy followed.

He thumbed through his cassettes for a minute before finding the right one. Nancy sat down on his bed, looking mostly amused.

“Here we go.”

And the guitar kicked in, with its oscillating twang. Then the drums.

*I am the son  
and the heir  
Of a shyness that is criminally vulgar*

Nancy rolled her eyes.

“Give it a sec,” Jonathan said, quiet.

And Nancy’s eyes went hazy, like she was really trying to listen. Jonathan knew he should stop staring at her lips. But then they parted and—

*You shut your mouth  
How can you say  
I go about things the wrong way?*

He felt the nudge of her hand on his thigh before realizing she had turned, was staring at him. Jonathan hadn't realized they were sitting so close. All it would take... just tilting his head and... she was so close.

Nancy stared at him, cocked her head like she was asking a question. And it must've seemed like he said yes because, before he had time to blink, Nancy was kissing him.

*I am human and I need to be loved  
Just like everybody else does*

She kissed him. It was idiotic, because she was *still* kissing him, but that was the thought running through his head on a loop. *She* kissed him. She kissed *him*. Even as he cupped her face, even as she sucked on his bottom lip, even as she sat in his lap, even...

Well, okay, that last one sort of overrode the initial shock.

"Is this, uh," Nancy started to speak again. He moved to kiss her cheek, her jaw, her neck. "Is this okay?"

Jonathan was sucking kisses on her neck and Nancy was making a sort of breathy noise that he really didn't ever want to stop and he was fairly certain he'd been asked a question but couldn't seem to concentrate on anything but Nancy. *Nancy*.

*"Jonathan."*

And that's all it took, Jonathan backed away like he'd been burned.

"I'm so sorry, I shouldn't have— "

Nancy kissed him again, chastely. "God, you're so dramatic."

"I thought, I mean, I'm— "

She put her hands on his shoulders. "I just asked if this was okay."

Jonathan may or may not have looked at Nancy like she was crazy.

“Kind of, like, insanely *more* than okay, Nancy.”

By then, her hands were on his arms, his biceps, and it struck him that it was kind of fucked up just how much that effected him.

“Okay. Good.”

This time, Jonathan kissed her.

It wasn't exactly his intent, but in seconds, Nancy was on her back and he was straddling her which was totally bizarre because he'd been thinking about this for so long. Or, more accurately, thinking about how much he wasn't allowed to want this. And, *shit*.

“Wait,” he told her, pulling away. “Harrington.”

“I already *told* you,” Nancy muttered, a hand on his chest, “we broke up.”

She was too distracting by half. Jonathan got off of her, sidled up by her side.

“Tell me what happened?”

Maybe it was a bad idea. Questioning the chance he was being offered. But that wasn't how he wanted this. Wanted them to be.

Nancy sighed, turned over so she was lying on her side. Face to face, like they had been in her bed a million years ago.

“I don't know how to do this,” she admitted.

Jonathan didn't speak. A little terrified of doing anything wrong. And a little more than terrified at the prospect of whatever she was about to say.

“After, uh,” Nancy looked pained. “You know. What happened, back then. I had trouble feeling... safe.”

Jonathan put his hand over her's without really thinking about it,

rubbing circles with his thumb.

“And I guess Steve felt safe. Or normal?” Nancy looked at the ceiling. “I knew you liked me. Or, I was pretty sure. But I didn’t want to think about that time. Any of it.”

Jonathan swallowed nervously. “So. What, uh... what changed?”

Nancy smiled softly, with knitted brow. Like she’d confused herself, but was sort of darkly amused by it all.

“It sounds so stupid, but just... leaving here. Time passing.” Nancy looked him in the eye. “I know you never liked him, but he did try. He did.”

She sounded like she was trying to convince herself.

“Everything finally stopped feeling like such a... *crisis*. And I sort of woke up and couldn’t deal with how different we were. Why should I have to try so hard to make it work? Because he was the first guy to pay any attention to me? Because he let me cry on his shoulder?”

Nancy shook her head, shakily exhaling.

“I hadn’t wanted to be with him in so long. But I couldn’t get over feeling like I owed him. Or needed him. Once I did... that was that.”

“I don’t... ” Jonathan struggled for a moment. “*not* like Steve.”

Nancy smirked with obvious disbelief.

“I mean it, Nancy.” He hazarded touching her. Running a thumb over her cheekbone. “He saved your life.”

“You saved my life, too,” Nancy pointed out, quietly. Leaning into his touch.

Jonathan almost laughed. “Yeah, there was a lot of that going around.”

Nancy smiled, rolled her eyes.

"You never needed anyone," Jonathan said, brushing hair out of her face. "You realize that, right?"

Nancy started to blush, which made him sort of guiltily pleased. "Shut up."

"I mean, you're smart and you're brave— "

"I don't feel brave."

"You are when it matters."

They were quiet.

"So, then, this is okay?" Jonathan asked, biting the inside of his cheek. "Us? Whatever that is."

Her smile fell and his stomach sank.

"I don't want you thinking, I don't know... " Nancy narrowed her eyes. "That you've won, or something."

He rolled his eyes. "That's a little high school, don't you think?"

"High school only ended, like, six months ago," Nancy fired back. "Besides, I'm not completely off-base. You did get *arrested* for beating him up."

Jonathan opened his mouth and closed it again. He shrugged. "Extenuating circumstances."

Nancy's mouth quirked. "Fair enough."

She drew her head to his chest, then. Jonathan's arms wrapping around her automatically, as he wondered if their heartbeats might sync, lying together like this.

"Do you ever... " Jonathan shut his eyes as Nancy's cool fingers wrapped around his neck, buried themselves in his hair. "You ever think it might come back?"

When he opened his eyes, Nancy was staring right back. Her wide

blue eyes even wider than usual, threatening to swallow her face. They'd already swallowed him whole.

"Every day," she answered, simply.

"You think it really will?" he asked, already knowing the answer.

"I do," she answered in a whisper. "I can't help it."

"Good." Jonathan faltered. "I mean, you know. Me too."

"At least," Nancy mumbled against his chest, "we'll be together now. Whatever ends up happening."

Jonathan felt his heart in his throat, heat and affection pumping through him like adrenaline. And he knew, as plainly as he knew anything, that he could do anything with this girl.

"Whatever ends up happening."

And they would be. And they were.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

I'm basing my timeline on the assumption they're juniors in the first season. If I'm wrong... blame the wikia and enjoy your slightly incorrect pop culture references. Title courtesy of Kate Bush's Hounds of Love. All incorrect Smith opinions espoused are not my own (although Nancy can't really be faulted, since none of their best songs existed yet). Let me know what you thought, as always :)